M. K. GANDHI

Gift of Gold

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BY
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled by
U. R. RAO.

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TO THE READER

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

Harijan, 29-4-'33, p. 2 M. K. GANDHI

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PREFACE

Gandhiji's advocacy of *aparigraha* or non-possession was based not merely on ethical grounds, but also on humanitarian grounds. Quite early in his own life, in South Africa, he had set a striking example of non-possession. In his eyes, possession of hoards of jewellery was the sign of inordinate attachment to material wealth; bedecking oneself with ornaments and flaunting them constituted an ugly manifestation of social inequality. This was the significance of his appeal to the conscience of the 'caste' Hindus to divest themselves of gold for the Harijan cause. The response to his call was spectacular; it had a spiritual and uplifting character. The examples of this response in 1933 and 1934 collected here only illustrate the deep emotional impact of his message.

Today the call to the people is on broader patriotic grounds. The purpose is to save the country from a serious drain of its vital resources. It is to help preserve from foreign aggression the most treasured values of our life and liberty. The crucible of self-sacrifice can surely transform gold into a potent weapon in the national armoury.

In the emergency facing the country, the choice before the people lies clearly between surrender of gold and surrender of freedom. No price paid for safeguarding our freedom can be too dear. Gift of gold must, therefore, strengthen the nation's potential of power for defending the motherland.

March 30, 1963
New Delhi

D. Sanjivayya

A WORD TO THE READER

Thirty years ago Gandhiji was performing one of his many tireless, country-wide pilgrimages in the service of the downtrodden. I was a student in college when he visited Mangalore, my home-town, in 1934. The memory is ineffaceable of how, at a public meeting, at which I as a volunteer helped to keep order, women young and old rose under Gandhiji's spell and devoutly put their jewellery into his hands. His alchemy had lit in their hearts and eyes a glow more golden than the ornaments they gave away. Included in the material here are living incidents of that transformation, recorded sometimes in Gandhiji's own words, sometimes in those of Chandrashankar Shukla and Mirabehn. These touching episodes from the past should reassure many and inspire others in making sacrifices for the country in her present need. I am grateful to Shri D. Sanjivayya, President, Indian National Congress, for writing a preface to this little pamphlet.

U. R. Rao

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GIFT OF GOLD

Gandhiji's Own Example:

...The Natal Indians bathed me with the nectar of love. Farewell meetings were arranged at every place, and costly gifts were presented to me.

Gifts had been bestowed on me before when I returned to India in 1896, but this time the farewell was overwhelming. The gifts, of course, included things in gold and silver, but there were articles of costly diamond as well.

What right had I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration? All the gifts, excepting a few from my clients, were purely for my service to the community, and I could make no difference between my clients and co-workers; for, the clients also helped me in my public work.

One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas, meant for my wife. But even that gift was given because of my public work, and so it could not be separated from the rest.

The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things I had a sleepless night. I walked up and down my room deeply agitated, but could find no

solution. It was difficult for me to forgo gifts worth hundreds; it was more difficult to keep them.

And even if I could keep them, what about my children? What about my wife? They were being trained to a life of service and to an understanding that service was its own reward.

I had no costly ornaments in the house. We had been fast simplifying our life. How, then, could we afford to have gold watches? How could we afford to wear gold chains and diamond rings? Even then I was exhorting people to conquer the infatuation for jewellery. What was I now to do with the jewellery that had come upon me?

I decided that I could not keep these things. I drafted a letter, creating a trust of them in favour of the community and appointing Parsi Rustomji and others trustees. In the morning, I held a consultation with my wife and children and finally got rid of the heavy incubus.

I knew that I should have some difficulty in persuading my wife, and I was sure that I should have none so far as the children were concerned. So I decided to constitute them my attorneys.

The children readily agreed to my proposal. "We do not need these costly presents, we must return them to the community, and should we ever need them, we could easily purchase them," they said.

I was delighted. "Then, you will plead with mother, won't you?" I asked them.

"Certainly," said they. "That is our business. She does not need to wear the ornaments. She would want to keep them for us, and if we don't want them, why should she not agree to part with them?"

But it was easier said than done.

"You may not need them," said my wife. "Your children may not need them. Cajoled, they will dance to your tune. I can understand your not permitting me to wear them. But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with gifts so lovingly given."

And thus the torrent of argument went on, reinforced, in the end, by tears. But the children were adamant. And I was unmoved.

I mildly put in: "The children have yet to get married. We do not want to see them married young. When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves. And surely we shall not have, for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if, after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then."

"Ask you? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-in-law! You who are trying to make *sadhus* of my boys from today! No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray, what right have you to my necklace?"

"But," I rejoined, "is the necklace given you for your service or for my service?"

"I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them!"

These were pointed thrusts, and some of them went home. But I was determined to return the ornaments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a consent from her. The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust-deed was prepared, and they were deposited with a bank, to be used for the service of the community, according to my wishes or to those of the trustees.

Often, when I was in need of funds for public purposes, and felt that I must draw upon the trust, I have been able to raise the requisite amount, leaving the trust money intact. The fund is still there, being operated upon in times of need, and it has regularly accumulated.

I have never since regretted the step, and as the years have gone by, my wife has also seen its wisdom. It has saved us from many temptations.

The Story of My Experiments with Truth, (1959 Ed.), pp. 160-61

Letter to Parsee Rustomjee:

[Extract from a letter of October 18, 1901, to Parsee Rustomjee, Durban.]

After deep consideration, I have come to the conclusion that, consistently with professions made

by me from time to time, I must not be satisfied with merely saying that what I value is the affection that has prompted the gifts, not the gifts as such. I have, therefore, decided to hand over the jewellery, as per accompanying schedule, to the African Banking Corporation with instructions to deliver the articles to the Natal Indian Congress against a receipt signed by the President and Honorary Secretary or Secretaries for the time being.

I make them over to the Congress on the following conditions:

(1) The jewellery or its value should form an emergency fund to be utilized only when the Congress has no other funds to fall back upon without the two landed properties.

(2) I should have the right to withdraw any or such of the jewellery that may then not have been utilized for devoting same to any beneficial object, whether within or outside the scope of the Congress.

When the necessity for utilizing the jewellery arises, and if it is possible, I would feel it an honour to be consulted by the Congress as to whether the object for which it is sought to utilize same is, in my opinion, an emergency within the scope of this letter. But the Congress is free at any time to withdraw the jewellery without reference to me.

I have taken the above step deliberately and prayerfully. I feel that neither I nor my family can make any personal use of the costly presents. They are too sacred to be sold by *me* or *my heirs*, and, seeing

that there can be no guarantee against the last contingency, in my opinion, the only way I can return the love of our people is to dedicate them all to a sacred object.

[*Schedule of jewellery*]

Gold medal presented in 1896.

Gold coin presented in 1896 by the Tamil Indians.

Gold chain presented by the Johannesburg Committee in 1899.

Gold chain, sovereign purse and seven gold coins presented by Mr. Parsee Rustomjee.

Gold watch presented by Mr. Joosub of Messrs Dada Abdoola & Co.

Diamond ring presented by the Community.

Gold necklace presented by the Gujarati Hindoos.

Diamond pin presented by Mr. Abdul Cadir and a Silver cup and plate presented by the Katiawar Hindoos, Stanger.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. III, pp. 208-9

No Jewellery:

[Extract from a letter dated April 20, 1907, to his elder brother, Lakshmidas Gandhi, who had demanded that Gandhiji should replace jewellery disposed of by him.]

As for getting the jewellery made afresh, I will not do so, as I consider it a sin. When I refuse to get the jewellery made, it means that my ideas about such things have substantially changed.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VI, p. 433

The Poor Man's Mite:

At Katol, a poor man had thrown a *cowrie* into one of the bags that were going the round. Gandhiji offered it for auction at the public meeting of Nagpur, with these remarks: "The poor man perhaps had nothing else to pay and he seems to have paid his all. It is an unsoiled *cowrie*, as Malaviyaji would call it. We attribute our earnings to fate, but what we give in the name of God and for the service of His creatures brings us merit. Looking at it as a symbol of sacrifice, it is more precious than gold." This *cowrie* was put to auction and sold for Rs. 111.

Harijan, 17-11-1933, p. 2

"Even a *cowrie* honestly acquired and sincerely given is a pearl beyond price."

Harijan, 29-6-1934, p. 154

Men of God or Wealth?

At a meeting of sweepers in their own quarters, Mr. and Mrs. Abhyankar received Gandhiji on behalf of the sweepers, whom they were trying to serve. Mrs. Abhyankar came to Gandhiji, and taking out two golden bangles off her wrists, gave them to him, saying in a voice almost choked with tears: "Nowadays husbands leave little for their wives. I can, therefore, only make this humble offering for the service of Harijans." Gandhiji could not help referring to it in his speech. He said: "What Mrs. Abhyankar said on behalf of hundreds of women like her has touched me deeply. While she was speaking, I looked

at Shri Abhyankar, and I saw that his eyes had become wet. I have steeled my heart, and I do not shed tears easily; but these words could not but move me. I admit I have been instrumental in making paupers of doctors, lawyers and merchants. I do not repent. On the contrary, I rejoice that many have embraced poverty voluntarily. Why should Mrs. Abhyankar, who is trying to identify herself, along with her husband, with the sweepers, put on golden bangles at all? In a poor country like India, where people walk for miles to get a dole of one pice per day, as they are doing in Orissa today, it does not behove anybody who cares for the poor to wear costly ornaments. In no other way can we identify ourselves with the Harijans. Those who have nothing else have God and are men of God—Harijans. Those who have wealth are men of wealth. All credit, therefore, to Motilalji, Das, Vithalbhai and many others whom I can mention and who parted with their possessions for the sake of the poor." [At Nagpur]

Harijan, 17-11-1933, p. 2

Response of the Masses:

The enthusiasm of the people everywhere has far exceeded expectations. At all places visited up till now, the meetings have been the largest ever held in them. Thousands of peasants swarm from villages to the nearest place which Gandhiji visits. Women attend in hundreds. Many part with some of their ornaments.

Harijan, 1-12-1933, p. 7

Gifts of Jewellery:

"I would like the thousands of sisters who attend my meetings to give me most, if not all, of the jewellery they wear. In this country of semi-starvation of millions and insufficient nutrition of practically eighty per cent of the people, the wearing of jewellery is an offence to the eye. A woman in India has rarely any cash which she can call her own. But the jewellery she wears does belong to her, though even that she will not, dare not, give away, without the consent of her lord and master. It ennobles her to part with, for a good cause, something she calls her own. Moreover, most of this jewellery has no pretension to art, some of it is positively ugly and a harbinger of dirt. Such are anklets, heavy necklaces, clasps worn not for adjusting the hair, but purely as a decoration for unkempt, unwashed and often evil-smelling hair, or row upon row of bangles from wrist to elbow. In my opinion, the wearing of expensive jewellery is a distinct loss to the country. It is so much capital locked up or, worse still, allowed to wear away. And in this movement of self-purification, the surrender of jewellery by women or men I hold to be a distinct benefit to society. Those who give do so gladly. My invariable condition is that on no account should the jewellery donated be replaced. Indeed, women have blessed me for inducing them to part with things which had enslaved them. And in not a few cases men have thanked me for being an instrument for bringing simplicity into their homes."

Harijan, 22-12-1933, p. 6

Auctions of Gifts:

"I have seen nothing wrong about them. They

set up a healthy rivalry and are an innocent method of evoking the generous impulse in man or woman for a noble cause. I have resorted to the method now for years without ever noticing the slightest evil effect produced by these auctions. Why is it wrong to pay a price beyond its intrinsic value for an article which one prizes even though it be as a memento, if it is not wrong to pay fabulous prices for worn-out manuscripts of authors reputed to be great? Surely, the price of an article is what a man voluntarily pays for it. And let it be remembered that people who bid at my auctions do not pay fancy prices for pleasing me. I know that they do not."

Harijan, 22-12-1933, p. 6

The Women of Southern India:

Special mention must be made of the generous response from the women of Southern India. In the matter of the *purdah* women in the South enjoy much greater freedom than their sisters in the North; and the heart cannot reconcile itself to the anomaly in the social order that, on the one hand, accords such freedom to women and, on the other, keeps Harijans in bondage. But the women themselves seem to have made up their minds to give to Harijan brothers and sisters the liberty and rights that they themselves enjoy and prize so dearly. Ornaments, rings, bangles, necklaces, mostly golden, have been literally showered at all meetings of ladies. One has often felt like shedding tears of joy at the sight of sisters readily disburdening themselves of their precious jewellery in a cause, the sacred character of which they have instinctively

realized. Gandhiji's eyes beam with delight when these sisters approach him with their contributions, and he has often laid bare his heart before them.

Harijan, 29-12-1933, pp. 5-6 [At Madras]

Gifts for Harijan Service:

"Wherever I go, people part with their coppers, silver and gold. Women are not behind-hand in making sacrifices. Certainly, they know for what purpose they give their money and ornaments. They know that all the money and ornaments they give will be utilized for the drive against untouchability, will be utilized for the service of the Harijans . . . . " [At Ellore]

Harijan, 5-1-1934, p. 7

The Begging Mission:

At every wayside station on the railway, Gandhiji gets up from his seat, wakes up if he is sleeping, leaves his meals in the middle if he is eating, and appears before the window to ask for money, and money begins to pour. At times Gandhiji cuts jokes which cause peals of laughter in the crowd, and still more money comes in. "Give something, it may be even a pice, but make some sacrifice for the cause," he says, "give up smoking for a day and give the saving to me." To him these coppers have a great value as a token of people's sympathy for the cause. To women he makes special appeals to give up some jewellery. 'A bangle for an autograph' is the price now generally fixed for women. At Madras a girl gave a five-rupee note for an autograph. "No," said Gandhiji, " a bangle." The girl took off two bangles and also gave the five-rupee note. "Have you your parents' permission to give this

away? Take away the bangles if you like." The girl took back one bangle saying she would keep it as a memento. "Won't you ask your parents to give a new bangle?" "No," came the emphatic reply. "Then let me have it." And the girl went off smiling. Another girl said, "How I can give anything without my father's permission?" "You may not," said Gandhiji, "but does your father claim all the freedom for himself and give you none?" A newly married girl said, "I will give you money, but not my jewellery. For, if I give away any jewellery, I am sure to have it replaced, which you would not like. I shall give you jewellery only when I am prepared to give it away for good." "You are right," said Gandhiji, "I do not want your money. Money I can have from your father for the asking. I want from you your jewellery. The condition is that it should not be replaced. I will patiently wait for the day when you will voluntarily come and put into my hands your jewellery." These conversations go on every day. But I can never forget the ennobling sights of women showering their ornaments with a smile of satisfaction and joy beaming in their eyes. They have recognized Gandhiji's mission as a mission of liberation of oppressed humanity. They have expressed their gratefulness for his life-long services to the women of India, to many of whom he has been 'the cup of strength in some great agony'.

Harijan, 5-1-1934, pp. 7-8

Call to Definite Sacrifice:

"This cause of Harijans is essentially for the women of India to tackle; and I hope that you, the Hindu

women of this place, will do your duty. I hope those of you, who have the wish and the ability to surrender all or any part of your jewellery, will do so. There is one condition attached to the gift. If you give anything whatsoever, it must not be replaced. I want you to feel that you personally have given something to this cause, which you cannot do when you give rupees or notes. For they come from either your parents or your husbands. But jewellery is your own property. When you surrender your jewellery without any intention of having it replaced by your parents or husbands, it is definitely your own sacrifice. I want you all, who have understood the spirit of the message I have delivered to you, to make that definite sacrifice."

Harijan, 5-1-1934, p. 8 [In Andhra]

"No Sacrifice Higher Than This":

Gandhiji has concluded the Andhra tour, entered the Mysore State and finished half the programme there also. The enthusiasm on the part of all classes of people continues unabated, but that of the Andhra women is so far unsurpassed. Money they paid freely and could perhaps have paid even more, but Gandhiji asked from them their jewellery and they generously responded. Gandhiji, in asking from them this special gift, has, besides enlisting their sympathy for this cause, another aim in mind. This voluntarily giving up of these marks of bondage, howsoever glittering, is to his mind a first step in the women's fight for their freedom, internal as well as external. "The real ornament of woman," he said to them, "is her character,

her purity. Metal and stones can never be real ornaments. The names of women like Sita and Damayanti have become sacred to us for their unsullied virtue, never for their jewellery, if they wore any. My asking from you your jewellery has also a wider significance. Several sisters have told me that they feel all the better for getting rid of their jewels." "I have called this," he said before another meeting, "an act of merit in more ways than one. No man or woman is entitled to the possession of wealth, unless he or she has given a fair share of it to the poor and the helpless. It is a social and religious obligation and has been called a sacrifice by the Bhagavadgita. He who does not offer this sacrifice has been called a thief. The Gita has enumerated many forms of sacrifice; but what greater sacrifice can there be than to serve the poor and the needy? For us, today, there can be no sacrifice higher than to forget the distinctions of high and low and to realize the equality of all men. I also wish to bring home to the women of India that real ornamentation lies, not in loading the body with metal and stones, but in purifying the heart and developing the beauty of the soul." On one occasion he recalled to them the sacrifice of the late Shrimati Annapurna Devi, who was the first in Andhra to set to her sisters a noble example of sacrifice and service, and said, "The very first day she met me she took off her ornaments—not one, but all. The women who witnessed the scene were amazed at what was happening. And then, there was a shower of ornaments. And do you think she looked less handsome because of her having given away the ornaments? Rather she looked to me more handsome.

The English language has the proverb, 'handsome is that handsome does'."

Harijan, 12-1-1934, p. 5

Kaumudi's Renunciation:

"It has been my privilege to witness many touching and soul-stirring scenes during a busy life packed with a variety of rich experiences. But at the moment of writing this, I cannot recall a scene more touching than that of the Harijan cause. I had just finished my speech at Badagara. In it I had made a reasoned appeal to the women present for jewellery. I had finished speaking and was selling the presents received, when gently walked up to the platform Kaumudi, a girl 16 years old. She took out one bangle and asked me if I would give my autograph. I was preparing to give it, when off came the other bangle. She had only one on each hand. I said, 'You need not give me both. I shall give you the autograph for one bangle only.'

"She replied by taking off her golden necklace. This was no easy performance. It had to be disengaged from her long plait of hair. But the Malabar girl that she is, she had no false modesty about performing the whole process before a wondering public counting several thousands of men and women. 'But have you the permission of your parents?' I asked. There was no answer. She had not yet completed her renunciation. Her hands automatically went to her ears and out came her jewelled ear-rings amid the ringing cheers of the public, whose expression of joy was no longer to be suppressed. I asked her again whether she had her parents' consent to the sacrifice. Before I could extract

any answer from the shy girl, someone told me that her father was present at the meeting, that he was himself helping me by bidding for the addresses I was auctioning and that he was as generous as his daughter in giving to worthy causes. I reminded Kaumudi that she was not to have the ornaments replaced. She resolutely assented to the condition. As I handed her the autograph, I could not help prefacing it with the remark: 'Your renunciation is a truer ornament than the jewellery you have discarded.' May her renunciation prove to have been an earnest of her being a true Harijan Sevika." [In Kerala]

Harijan, 19-1-1934, p. 4

A "Momentous Decision":

Gandhiji has written in the *Harijan* about the renunciation of Kaumudi, a little Malabari girl of 16. On the last day of Gandhiji's stay at Calicut, she came to see Gandhiji along with her father. Not having accompanied Gandhiji at Badagara, I saw Kaumudi for the first time. There was no guile about her. She spoke gently and was very reticent. She had studied up to the Intermediate and followed the conversation well. Gandhiji wanted to know more about her sacrifice. He asked whether she had come to the meeting with her mind made up to make the sacrifice or she made the decision instantaneously at the meeting.

"She had made up her mind at home," replied the father, "and had obtained our permission." "But, will the mother not feel sorry to see you without any jewellery?"

"She will," said Kaumudi, "but I am sure she will not compel me to wear it again."

"But when you get married, as in due course you will, your husband will, perhaps, not like to see you without any ornaments. What will you do then? I have a moral difficulty before me. I have written an article for the *Harijan* about your sacrifice, which is, indeed, wonderful. I have said in that article that you would never wear any ornaments again. If you are not prepared for that, I shall have to alter that part of the article; or you will have to stand adamant against the wishes of your prospective husband. That you, a Malabari girl, may be capable of doing, or you will have to select a husband who will be satisfied to have you without ornaments. You may tell me frankly what you feel."

Kaumudi slowly took in the full import of what Gandhiji said. It was a great thing she was called on to do. She had to make a momentous decision. She cogitated for a while, and then uttered only one sentence, "I will select a husband who will not compel me to wear ornaments."

Gandhiji's eyes beamed with delight. "I had Annapurna," he said, "she was married and yet she discarded all her jewellery, and she kept her pledge till the moment of her death. Now I have you." And he never tired, since then, of speaking to women of Kaumudi's noble sacrifice. [In Kerala]

Harijan, 26-1-1934, pp. 5-6

Follow Kaumudi's Example:

"Sisters can copy little Kaumudi, and discard all the jewellery that they wear."

Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 10

Meenakshi's Sacrifice:

At Trivandrum, among the many visitors was a girl of seventeen. As she came and stood before Gandhiji, he asked, "Who are you?"

"A little girl," she replied.

"What has a little girl to do with jewellery?" Gandhiji had seen the many ornaments she was wearing.

"Because I want to remain a girl," replied Meenakshi.

"Then you must not wear jewellery." And Gandhiji narrated the story of Kaumudi's sacrifice.

"Kaumudi was sixteen, younger than you by an year, yet she discarded all her jewellery."

Meenakshi's eyes brightened. "I, too, would like to give my jewellery," she said.

"Have you your parents' permission?"

"I will get it."

"I know Malabar girls are free."

"Shall I give it to you?"

"Yes, to Harijans."

"That is what I mean."

"If you think I am a *bona fide* Harijan, then give it to me. If you think I am a humbug, do not give it to me. I tempt all girls to give up their jewellery. I know it is a hard thing for a girl to do. There are

all sorts of fashions to-day in society. I say, 'handsome is that handsome does'."

"If I give myself to you?"

"Yes, I have your cousin, and now I have you."

"That is settled."

"Even then, I give you one night to consider."

Next morning, when I saw Meenakshi, I could not easily recognize her. All her ornaments had gone. "Where are your ornaments?" I asked her.

"I have given them up!"

"To Gandhiji?"

"No, that I could not do," she said. "My father has debts, and I cannot give away the ornaments. But I have made up my mind never to wear them again."

"Are your parents reconciled to the change you have made?"

"Father is. But mother finds it difficult to do so."

Later in the day, Meenakshi, with her parents, came to Gandhiji and gave him a gold bangle and a necklace for the Harijan cause. Gandhiji had known beforehand of the debts. He said to the parents, "You may not give me these articles. Discharge whatever part of the debt you can with the ornaments that Meenakshi has discarded. She is never to ask for them again."

Tears flowed down Meenakshi's cheeks. Her emotion was too deep for words. She had made a life-long decision.

Gandhiji then asked the mother why she could not bless her daughter in her noble decision.

"She will have to be married," replied the

mother, "and it will be difficult for us to find out a husband who will be contented to have her without ornaments."

"You may have no anxiety on that score," said Gandhiji, pacifying her fears, "I shall find you, when the time comes, not one but fifty candidates for Meenakshi's hand, and you may select any one of them."

The mother blessed Meenakshi's decision. It was a touching scene. It is examples of noble sacrifices like these that sustain one and make life livable in the midst of trials.

Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 4

University Students, Annamalai:

The meeting of the students of the Annamalai University at Chidambaram deserves special mention. The auctions at the end of Gandhiji's speech were very brisk, the spontaneous response from the small number of ladies present being remarkable. A number of ornaments quickly came in. Some ladies purchased things with their precious ornaments.

Harijan, 23-2-1934, p. 16

"Wise Husbands" of Coorg:

The evening halt was at Gandikutti, a place which all of us left with a sigh, so charming was the beauty of its surroundings. We heard from the host that a girl was fasting since that morning in order to take Gandhiji to her home which was only next door. As she approached Gandhiji, she could not help weeping, she could not utter a word.

"Why are you fasting?" asked Gandhiji.

"In order that you may come to my home," she replied with a voice choked with tears. "I would give you ornaments!"

"That is lovely. But you must break your fast first."

"No, not until you promise to come."

"Don't ask for a promise; eat this orange first. Don't make a bargain. Trust me. You must have faith in your irresistible love."

But she would not eat. She could not understand that the promise had already been made. Mirabehn peeled the orange for her. She still looked askance. "Will you come?"

"Yes, he will come," said Mirabehn; and Gauri took the orange with a smile.

Gandhiji wanted to know more about her determination to give her ornaments. She said she would not replace the ornaments she would give away. She was twenty-one years old and was married. Her husband was present. Gandhiji asked him, "Whose suggestion was it that she should give her ornaments?"

"It was her own desire. I gave my assent to it," replied the young man. He earned forty rupees a month. Gandhiji gave him sufficient warning against the ornaments being given in a fit of enthusiasm. "It is good, of course," said he, "if you live a simple life of thrift." And both Gauri and her husband agreed. Later on, when Gandhiji went to her house, she parted with some of her jewellery.

There was another young woman who had given her gold bangles to Gandhiji. Her husband was also

present. "You know," Gandhiji told him, "your wife has given her bangles to me. Has she done so with your consent?"

"Yes, with my consent." And he added, "It is her wish and pleasure. The ornaments belong to her. I have no power to refuse my consent."

"All husbands do not act so wisely as that. What is your age?"

"Thirty."

"At your age I did not act so wisely. Wisdom came to me later", said Gandhiji amidst hearty laughter from the hearers.

Harijan, 2-3-1934, p. 24

South Kanara's Contribution:

At Puttur, Gandhiji spoke at some length at a public meeting and stopped for the midday meal and rest. During the meeting a girl came forward to garland Gandhiji. He said he was not the man to be dismissed with mere flowers, and asked her to give him some of the jewellery she was wearing. She tried to take off her ring, but it was too tight. However, she brought it to Gandhiji towards the close of the meeting. On getting another substantial ring, Gandhiji said, "I always get substantial things from Karnatak."

"Karnatak has habituated me to receiving ornaments and many purses. I do not think that any province has beaten Karnatak in giving jewellery. And I see that you have made a good beginning."

Harijan, 9-3-1934, p. 26

Ladies of Mangalore:

At the ladies' meeting, girls sang a Marathi song, and the ladies presented a purse of Rs. 235 and a Hindi address, which was read by Shrimati Anandibai, who is the soul of the women's movement in the city. In the course of his reply, Gandhiji said that this was not the first time he had met the women of Mangalore. He remembered at least two occasions when they had tired him out by their gifts of jewellery.

. . . And then there was a procession of women coming, one after another, to the platform with their gifts of money and jewellery. There was a regular mint of money, and Thakkar Bapa's capacious pockets could not hold all the offerings made by the women of Mangalore.

Harijan, 9-3-1934, p. 27

Nirupama's Gift:

The Hindi Premi Mandal's address at Udupi was read by a little girl named Nirupama, and Gandhiji asked her, as usual, for her jewellery. The girl had been prepared for it. She took off her bangles and necklace and gave them to Gandhiji with a pensive look on her face, and he, therefore, returned the ornaments to her. Nirupama, however, came to the place where Gandhiji had put up and delivered up to him the things on which he had cast his greedy eye. The fact was that her parents, desiring to dispossess their daughter of her ornaments and simplify her tastes, had prepared her for the renunciation. At the last moment, however, she had weakened. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. The

determined parents, however, succeeded in persuading her to part with her ornaments cheerfully, which she appeared to have done, because Gandhiji offered them back to her several times.

Harijan, 9-3-1934, p. 30

Some weeks later, Gandhiji wrote to Nirupama:

". . . Ornaments are unnecessary. They create in the girls a fascination for outward beauty. In this land of poverty, there should be a little less attraction for ornaments. That is why I am opposed to ornaments.

Bapu's blessings."

This Was Bapu: R. K. Prabhu, (1959 Ed.), p. 38

A Touching Incident:

Between Gumia and Jharia, Gandhiji took a public meeting at Bermo. As usual, there was a general collection among the audience. I went down to collect among the women. They gave freely of their money, but an old lady with bony, trembling hands gave me the gold ring from her nose. "How old are you, mother?" I said. "82", came the faltering reply. And then she added, "Can I not get to the platform to touch his feet?" I explained that it would be dangerous for her to try, as there was a big crowd and she might easily get crushed. Some ten minutes later, when I was standing on the platform in the midst of people shouting and pushing, I suddenly caught sight of the old dame making her way up to Gandhiji. He greeted her with radiant smiles and told her she was old enough to be his mother. She wanted to say many things, but she could not find words. All she could do

was to point to her shaking arms and explain by signs that she wanted to give him silver bangles, too, but that it was impossible to pull them over her knobbly old hands. Gandhiji would not cut the bangles, as he has done in some cases when the bangles would not come off the hands easily and when it was a case of encouraging the discarding of ornamentation by young women.

MIRA

Harijan, 25-5-1934, p. 115

"Donation of Tainted Money":

"The gift of what you assume to be ill-gotten gains cannot lessen the guilt of the exploiter. If he had kept the money for himself, that would have been an additional count against him. If, instead, he makes a gift of it to me from pure motives, he escapes the additional sin. It is also likely that a good use of his gift may wean the exploiter from immoral means of making money. But no blame attaches to me for having accepted the gift. As the foul waters from drains flowing into the sea partake of its purity, even so does tainted wealth become pure when put to the purest use. There is one condition, however, that we have assumed, viz., that the gift is made and accepted out of pure motives."

Harijan, 28-7-1940, p. 219

Ishopanishad's Injunction:

"In the first *shloka* of *Ishopanishad* that is repeated everyday at the beginning of the prayer, one is asked to dedicate everything to God and then use it to the required extent. The principal condition laid down is

that one must not covet what belongs to another. These two maxims contain the quintessence of the Hindu religion."

Harijan, 28-4-1946, p. 111

The first *mantra* of *Ishopanishad* says that it is a man's duty to surrender his all to God in the first instance. There is nothing which he can call his own. Having made the surrender, man is to take out of it what he may require for his legitimate needs but not a jot more.

Harijan, 12-5-1946, p. 130

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